IN THE CLAIMS

Please delete claims 2-5, 12 and 15 without prejudice or disclaimer.

Please replace claims 1, 18, 20, 21, 23, 25 and 26 as follows.

1. (Amended) A process for producing a peptide having a desired biological activity, comprising the steps of:

(1) culturing cells transformed with an expression vector having a nucleotide sequence encoding a peptide of interest that has a helper peptide added thereto, and then harvesting said peptide of interest that has a helper peptide added thereto from said culture, wherein the helper peptide has 5 to 50 amino acid residues and is designed so that the isoelectric point of the peptide of interest that has helper peptide added thereto is between 8 and 12;

(2) cleaving off from the peptide of interest that has the helper peptide added thereto obtained in step (1) [or step (2)], the helper peptide and the peptide of interest; and

(3) purifying the peptide of interest obtained in step (2).

18. (Twice Amended) The process according to claim 1, wherein an ion exchange resin is used in the purification process.

20. (Twice Amended) The process according to claim 1, wherein a reverse phase chromatography or a hydrophobic chromatography is used in the purification process.

21. (Twice Amended) The process according to claim 1, wherein a surfactant and/or a salt is added to maintain the solubility of the peptide of interest.

23. (Thrice Amended) The process according to claim 1, wherein endotoxin is present in the peptide of interest obtained in step (3), and wherein the content of endotoxin is not greater than 0.03 units/mg.

25. (Amended) An expression vector comprising a nucleotide sequence encoding a peptide of interest that has a helper peptide added thereto, wherein the helper peptide has 5 to 50 amino acid residues and is designed so that the isoelectric point of the peptide of interest that has the helper peptide added thereto is between 8 and 12.

26. (Amended) A prokaryotic or a eukaryotic cell transformed with an expression vector comprising a nucleotide sequence encoding a peptide of interest that has a helper peptide added thereto, wherein the helper peptide has 5 to 50 amino acid residues and is designed so that the isoelectric point of the peptide of interest that has the helper peptide added thereto is between 8 and 12.

Please add new claims 29-49 as follows:

--29. (New) A process for producing a peptide having a desired biological activity, comprising the steps of:

(1) culturing cells transformed with an expression vector having a nucleotide sequence encoding a fusion protein that has a protective peptide added to the peptide of interest that has a helper peptide added thereto, and then harvesting said fusion protein from said culture, wherein the helper peptide has 5 to 50 amino acid residues and is designed so that the isoelectric point of the peptide of interest that has helper peptide added thereto is between 8 and 12;

(2) cleaving off from said fusion protein the peptide of interest that has a helper peptide added thereto and the protective peptide, and purifying the peptide of interest that has the helper peptide added thereto as desired;

(3) cleaving off from the peptide of interest that has the helper peptide added thereto obtained in step (2), the helper peptide and the peptide of interest; and

(4) purifying the peptide of interest obtained in step (3).

30. (New) The process according to claim 29, wherein said protective peptide has 30 to 200 amino acid residues.

31. (New) The process according to claim 29, wherein an ion exchange resin is used in the purification process.

32. (New) The process according to claim 31, wherein said ion exchange resin is a cation exchange resin.

33. (New) The process according to claim 29, wherein a reverse phase chromatography or a hydrophobic chromatography is used in the purification process.

34. (New) The process according to claim 29, wherein a surfactant and/or a salt are added in at least one of steps (1) to (5) to maintain the solubility of the peptide of interest.

35. (New) The process according to claim 29, wherein the host cell is a prokaryotic cell or a eukaryotic cell.

36. (New) The process according to claim 35, wherein the host cell is *Escherichia coli*.

see claim 13

37. (New) The process according to claim 29, wherein the peptide of interest is an amidated peptide.

38. (New) The process according to claim 29, wherein the peptide of interest is a GLP-1 derivative having an insulinotropic activity.

39. (New) The process according to claim 38, wherein the GLP-1 derivative having an insulinotropic activity has an isoelectric point of 4.5 to 9.0.

40. (New) The process according to claim 38, wherein the GLP-1 derivative having an insulinotropic activity has an isoelectric point of 5.5 to 7.5.

41. (New) The process according to claim 1, wherein an ion exchange resin is used in the purification process.

42. (New) The process according to claim 41, wherein said ion exchange resin is a cation exchange resin.

43. (New) The process according to claim 1, wherein a reverse phase chromatography or a hydrophobic chromatography is used in the purification process.

44. (New) The process according to claim 1, wherein a surfactant and/or a salt is added to maintain the solubility of the peptide of interest.

45. (New) The process according to claim 38, wherein the purity of the GLP-1 derivative obtained having an insulinotropic activity is 98% or greater.

46. (New) The process according to claim 29, wherein the content of endotoxin in the final purified product is not greater than 0.03 units/mg.

47. (New) The process according to claim 29, wherein the peptide of interest obtained in step (2) is subjected to a modification reaction to obtain a modified peptide.

48. (New) An expression vector comprising a nucleotide sequence encoding a fusion protein that has a protective peptide added to a peptide of interest that has a helper peptide added thereto, wherein the helper peptide has 5 to 50 amino acid residues and is designed so that the isoelectric point of the peptide of interest that has the helper peptide added thereto is between 8 and 12.

49. (New) A prokaryotic or a eukaryotic cell transformed with an expression vector comprising a nucleotide sequence encoding a fusion protein that has a protective peptide added to a peptide of interest that has a helper peptide added thereto, wherein the helper peptide has 5 to 50 amino acid residues and is designed so that the isoelectric point of the peptide of interest that has the helper peptide added thereto is between 8 and 12.--